Knowing in interaction: Fieldwork on epistemicity and intersubjectivity

Exploring Kogi epistemic marking in interactional elicitation tasks: A report from the field

Dominique Knuchel (University of Bern)

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Outline

I. Introduction

- The notion of engagement
- Engagement marking in Kogi

II. Interactional elicitation tasks

- Description of stimuli and procedures
- Results and examples

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The notion of ‘engagement’

- “A grammatical system for encoding the relative accessibility of an entity or state of affairs to the speaker and addressee”
  (Evans et al. 2018)
- Various conceptions of accessibility, i.e. perceptual, epistemic, cognitive (e.g. attention, awareness, knowledge, epistemic rights, expectations…)
- Access to referents or state of affairs
- Intersubjectivity: indication of accessibility to speaker as well as to addressee, as estimated by the speaker
- Epistemicity: distribution of knowledge / epistemic authority

Joint attention demonstrative

- One of three demonstratives, first associated with addressee-proximity, reflects attentional contrast

(ad)nominal DEM	DISTANCE	
JOINT ATTENTION	close to SPKR	far from SAP
—	*hẽhié*	*kwẽhié*
+	***twēhié***	

- Example from elicitation:

A: *Kwẽhié.*	'That one over there!'	[pointing out one of the objects]
B: *Kwẽhié?*	'That one over there?'	[checking whether the they have identified the right object]
A: *Aha,* ***twēhié.***	'Yes, that one.'	[confirming that B has identified the one A pointed out]

Joint access demonstrative

- The use of the form is dependent on a speaker's assumption about the addressee's attentional state
- *twẽhié* is used, irrespective of distance, to refer to an object that is in the focus of attention of both speaker and addressee
- It cannot be used when joint attention is not yet established
- *twẽhié* is also used for referents mentioned earlier in discourse > speaker assumes that referent is still accessible to addressee

Engagement prefixes

- A set of four verbal prefixes which signal (a)symmetries in access to a state of affairs between speech act participants (Bergqvist 2016)
- Two parameters
  - Perspective: whose knowledge/perception is at stake?
  - (A)symmetrical access: shared vs. non-shared

	Speaker perspective	Addressee perspective
Symmetric	*ni-*	*shi-*
Asymmetric	*na(k)-*	*sha-*

Engagement prefixes

(1)

hẽhié=ki nahí gamá nzha (ni-ná)

DEM=SW 1SG.POSS bag SPKR.SYM-be

‘This is my bag.’ (cnc_el)

(2)

A girl says to her younger brother who mistakenly took her school bag:

nahí nak-ldá!

1SG.POSS SPKR.ASYM-be

‘That's mine!’ (obs)

Characteristics of engagement prefixes

- Resources for argumentation, negotiation, indicating unexpected information, directing attention, claiming epistemic rights, enquiring about mental states...
- Not obligatory: unmarked/differently marked alternatives
- Used in contexts in which a speaker whishes to epistemically qualify a proposition
- Use is dependent on genre, age / social status of speakers, discourse structure
- Comparable to modal particles (e.g. Germanic languages)
- Semantics/function of such forms is often opaque to speakers

How to explore engagement in Kogi?

- ENG forms are infrequent in elicited materials from intial research phase (i.e. translated utterances, elicited narratives either free or stimuli-based)
- Contexts arise in verbal interaction between actual speakers in which (a)symmetries in perceptual/epistemic access exist

Ideal data:

- naturally occurring speech
- face-to-face interaction, referring to objects / state of affairs in speech situation
- conversations concerning personal knowledge / experiences / opinions

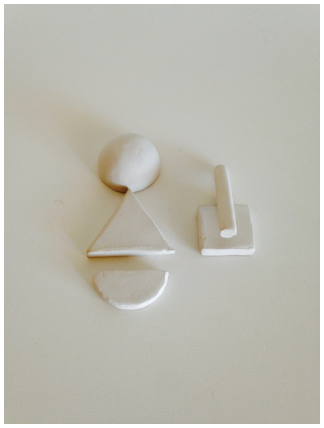
How to explore engagement in Kogi?

- Challenges of obtaining/working with naturally occuring speech…
- Opportunities of interactional, stimuli-based elicitation tasks
  - Fairly natural conversational data
  - Designed to target certain topics or expressions
  - (A)symmetries in access given by task design
  - Problem solving that induces verbal negotiation, argumentation, question-answer sequences

Interactional elicitation tasks

- Shape Classifier Task
- The Difference Task
- Family Problems Picture Task
- (Positional Verbs matcher-director task [Ameka et al. 1999, Hellwig 2006])

Shape Classifier Task

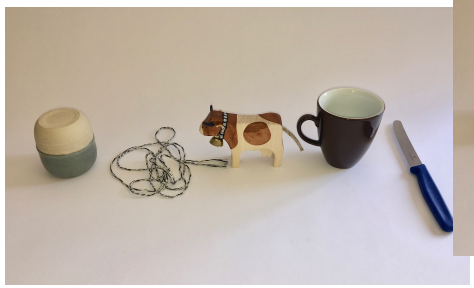


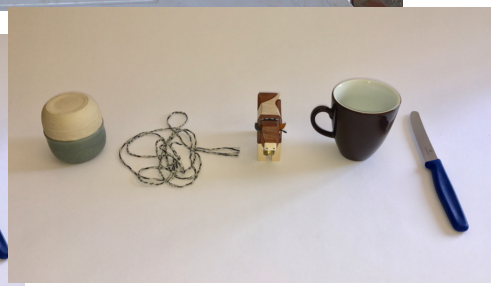
- Variation of shape classifier task (Seifart 2003)
- Inspired by study on Jahai demonstratives (Burenhult 2003)
- 25 objects of various shapes and sizes, a subset is depicted in picture
- Asymmetrical access: Director has access to pictures, while matcher does not
- Demonstratives, asymmetric prefixes

Shape Classifier Task

The difference task

- Based on Enfield & de Ruiter (2003)
- Original task designed to investigate aspects of multimodal interaction
- 10 Pairs of almost identical picutres
- Participants need to spot the difference
- No interactional asymmetry inherent in the director-matcher design
- Symmetric prefixes





The Family Problems Picture Task

- Collaborative story-building /-telling (San Roque et al. 2012)

The Family Problems Picture Task

- Four phases:
  I. Description of each picture
  II. Organization of cards into a coherent narrative
  III. Third-person narrative to an audience
  IV. First-person narrative
- Depictions of socially-pregnant and emotionally-charged situations
- The four phases induce different language choices, e.g. descriptions, conversations, narrative discourse, reported speech

Results

- Fewer instances of ENG marking than anticipated, yet they are in line with hypotheses

Demonstratives

- Used extensively in the ShaClaTa, to some extent in FPPT
- Evidence for demonstrative that is licensed by joint access

Engagement prefixes

- Only some in matching tasks – no correlation with task design (symmetric vs. asymmetric access to stimuli)
- Most prominent in FPPT, particularly in reported speech

Example: ShaClaTask

(3)

D: *ezwa ama kẽyakẽyá-gatse naldatshak zumẽya tũ gatse*
one uhm edged-seem be.but star look look.like
'One, uhm, with edges but it looks like a star.'

M: *kẽyakẽyá gatse naldatshak zumẽya tũ gatse*
edged look.like be.but star look look.like
'One with edges but it looks like a star.'

meilde ***sha-hangu-kú*** *zumẽya tũ-gatse?*
which.one ADDR.ASYM-think-1SG star look-seem
'Which one may it be (lit: I think)? It looks like a star?'

D: *hai* ***hē*** ***nzha (ni-na)*** ***ni-hangu-kú*** *hai kẽyakẽyá gatse hai*
DEM DEM SPKR.SYM.be SPKR.SYM-think-1SG DEM edged look DEM
'Here, it's this one, I think [gestures with lips]. Here, the one with the edges, here.'

Example: ShaClaTask

M: *kẽyakẽyá-gatse naldachák hui hukase, hẽnié?*
edged-seem but house roof, DEM
'With edges but like the roof of a house, this one?'

D: ***twē shi-nalda***
DEM ADDR.SYM-be
'Is it that one?'

ẽ=ki makẽwã ak-ldukka ezwa mozhwa ***twē*****=ki** *maigwa mechwi*
DEM=SW four 3SG.IO-be one two DEM=SW three only
'This one [in the picture] has four sides, but that one only has three.'

twē *tũgatse ama tweka mua-ka pa* ***nak-ldo***
DEM look-seem uhm DEM middle=LOC be.FLAT SPKR.ASYM-be.located
'It's similar to that one, uhm, it's there in the middle!'

Example: ShaClaTask

M: *hẽnié?*
DEM
'This one?'

D: *ese* ***twē***
DEM DEM
'[Yes] that one.'

(kog_170826_sct3-2)

Examples: DiffTask

(4) *hi* ***shi-****tũ-kú?*
what ADDR.SYM-see-1SG.SUBJ.PRS
‘What is it? (lit.: What do I see?)’

(5) *malakze hangwa* ***ni-****gu-kú*
sweet think SKPR.SYM-do-1SG.SUBJ.PRS
‘It's candy, I think.’ (LCZ_32)

Example: DiffTask

DiffTask (LGN_7-11)

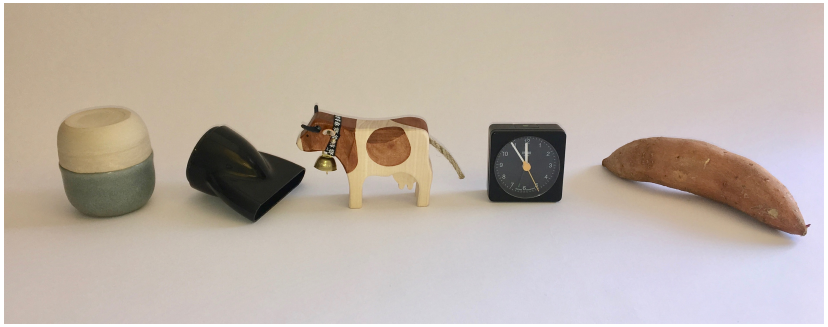
A: *bakka zhawa*
‘A little cow.’

B: *mh no inzhi zhawa nakaldini hi zhawa*
‘No, there's a yuca root, then what?’

A: *bakka zhawa*
‘A little cow.’

B: *relo zhawa nenka* ***nakldá*** [SPKR.ASYM]
‘There's a clock!’

A: *ah ah baka zhawa*
‘No, a little cow.’



Examples: FPPT

(5)
heki atshi-ka ***nak-****ldá* *mihí munzhi*
DEM do-PRS SPKR.ASYM-be 2SG.POSS woman

ak-bẽya-té
3SG.IOBJ-say-IPFV

‘"This is what your wife does [without you knowing].", he is telling him.’
(fppt1-1_cnc)

Examples: FPPT

(fppt1-3_cnc)

(3)

ekí	*sigí*	*na*	*ma-wa-tũ-ne*
DEM.ADV	man	with	2SG.DO-3PL.SJ-see-PST
nag-a-bẽ-ne			*nalda* ***shã (shi-na)***
1SG.IO-3PL.SJ-tell-PST			be ADDR.SYM.be

[Man:] 'They saw you like this with another man, is that so?.'

no	*z-häbbia-l*	*nuka*	*ne-nuge*	***nzha (ni-na)***
no	INTR-buy-PURP	only	go-1SG.PST	SPKR.SYM.be

[Woman:] 'No, I just went to buy [something].'

Conclusions

- Fewer instances of ENG marking than anticipated, yet they are in line with hypotheses
  - Evidence for joint access demonstrative in ShaClaTa
  - Instances of ENG prefixes in contexts of convincing, unexpected information, disputes
  - Use of ENG prefixes in reported conversations (FPPT)
- Limitations
  - Naturalistic interactions, yet artifical setting / topics
  - Low frequency of ENG markers due to low personal investment in and low complexity of matching tasks

Outlook

- ENG markers in reported conversations
- Contexts of gossip, arguments, accusation

Outlook

- Planned interactional elicitation task based on Senft (2003) "Reasoning in language"
- Original task investigates how speakers "verbally reason about moral issues"
- Moral problems presented in open story plots or scenarios that require a solution
- Plots are aimed to present common conflicts in societies and human behaviour
- Discussion about personal opinions and social norms

Outlook

- Stimuli: Unfinished short stories / descriptions of problems
- Participants: Native speaker interviewer, and at least two speakers
- Procedure: Interviewer presents scenario, solicits discussion of possible outcome/solution and imagined conversations

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